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### MONTHLY RETROSPECT OF POLITICS.

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"Tis all a libel—Vicary, Sir, will say  
 "Not yet my friend! to-morrow but  
 "it may;  
 "And for that very cause, I print  
 "to-day."

IT may surely be granted to the drudge, who, in writing a political retrospect in the present inauspicious times, when he has so much of the unpleasant, and so little of the agreeable to record, who

"With lab'ring step  
 "Must trace the former footsteps: pace  
 "the round  
 "Eternal, to climb life's worn, heavy  
 "wheel  
 "Which draws up nothing new: to beat  
 "and beat  
 "The beaten track,"

to avail himself of every aid he can command, at once to lighten his own labour, and by an interesting and pleasing variety, to render the task imposed on him, more acceptable to the public. Thus, in the present instance, the person who, for this time hoists the pen, gladly avails himself for an introduction to this month's retrospect of the following energetic and just sentiments, conveyed to him in a letter, from a correspondent in England, who, for a spirit of lofty independence and just political opinions, is second to no man. The propriety of the reasoning, and the true delineation of the hardship in cases of supposed libels will recommend the extract to

the true lovers of freedom, and tend it is hoped to revive the almost expiring embers of the once highly cherished but now almost apparently extinguished flame of liberty.

"The severe sentence on Cobbett will have a tendency for a while to lower the tone of the press and to damp the exertions of the timid. But there are men who are not thus to be dismayed, whose spirit like the waves of the ocean, are known to rise in proportion to the storm.

"In this country justice between man and man may be fairly administered, but between man and the government, this, in my opinion, is not the case. Let us state, for instance, the proprietor of a newspaper. Sedition and libel cannot be defined. The attorney general fastens upon this, or that particular paragraph, and the clerk of the crown nominates a number of individuals, from whom a jury is to be selected, and though the accused person may have a right of challenge, yet if the vacancies in the jury are to be filled up from the number appointed by the officer of the crown, the situation of the individual is by no means improved. He is tried by a prejudiced and of course by a partial jury, and nine times out of ten the decisions are in favour of government. I say prejudiced and partial, and I think without exaggeration, for the clerk of the crown will ever be the creature

of the crown, and will take care to nominate men whose political sentiments are in unison with his own. And thus the stream of justice becomes feculent at its very source and the liberty and property of man are decided upon by despotism in the disguise of free forms, which in my opinion, is the worst of all species of slavery. *From a nation that is enslaved and knows it, we can expect every thing; but a nation that is enslaved and imagines itself free, is in a perilous state indeed.*

"On the other hand, let us suppose the proprietor of a newspaper to have been prosecuted and acquitted, what is his situation? He has incurred the expense of two or three hundred pounds. The minds of himself and family have been greatly distressed; and he has not the least redress. Nay, in the course of a few weeks or months, the attorney general may pounce upon him again; and thus harassed, he must either be ruined or lower his tone. The paper becomes flat and insipid, his customers fall off, the property is offered for sale, and purchased by some government agent, and thus oppression is triumphant. This is not an ideal picture, the proprietor of the *Liverpool Chronicle* was prosecuted by the attorney general, was convicted, and confined in Lancaster castle; his affairs went to ruin, and he is now a journeyman printer."

At the late dinner given by the electors of Westminster to their worthy representative, and in commemoration of his liberation from the Tower, Sir Francis Burdett appeared with undiminished lustre, to the confusion of his numerous enemies; for the friends of corruption are all in different degrees his enemies. His lukewarm friends may also see that he acts on independent ground, uninfluenced by popular clamour, and can thus justify his not taking a part in the procession on the day that parliament was prorogued. After the dinner he made a dignified speech to the company, and declared, *that his first object was the approbation of his own mind.* Acting on so enlightened and truly worthy motives, he rises superior to the selfish views which actuate clamorous demagogues, and has a fixed principle

of action superior to that versatility, which is influenced by the popular breath, often thoughtlessly given, and as thoughtlessly withdrawn: for fanatical passionate leaders often make fanatical passionate followers, and neither act wisely nor effectually. A popular ferment is raised, but for want of coolness and perseverance nothing valuable is achieved. There is a smoke but no lasting flame.

In the course of his speech, speaking of the present state of parties, he showed that the Fox party may now be said to be almost, if not entirely, extinct, having merged into that of the Grenvillites. Let us fondly cherish the hope, that the *party of the people* will increase. Statesmen by profession have too frequently been influenced in some parts of their conduct by the selfish views of private interests, but a people alive to their own interests, and following leaders only so far as they have, after repeated trials, found them to be honest, are in the best situation for reclaiming or retaining their liberties. It is a sound political axiom, that without virtue both in *leaders* and *people*, freedom can never long be preserved. A corrupt people, enslaved by their passions and vices will soon be politically enslaved by their government, for to the views of the rulers, the vices of the people, will form the most convenient tools to effect the purposes of subjection.—Vice facilitates the acceptance of a bribe, either direct or indirect, through the posts and places in the power of a government to bestow; and those thus bought, readily join in the hunt against their less obsequious companions.

The inhabitants of these isles have much cause to be alarmed at their situation. The page of history informs of the fatal spread of luxury, and the rapid progress of despotism in imperial Rome. What Rome became, Britain may ere long be. A nation sunk in luxury never long preserved its freedom. It is the essential nature of vice to enslave. The people are the source and fountain of virtue, as well as of power; and if the people themselves are not virtuous, they in vain look for virtue in their rulers, who readily yield to the necessities

of the times, and are sufficiently pleased to rule a corrupted people by corrupt means. In fact, such a people are incapable of being ruled in any other manner. They would not support an administration that would withhold the debasing donatives and pensions which they claim for their vicious indulgences.

On the subject of the abolition of the slave trade, we meet with the following information in the fourth report of the directors of the African Institution, an association formed to watch over the interests of the much wronged inhabitants of the coasts of Africa.

It has been discovered that in defiance of all the penalties imposed by act of parliament, vessels under foreign flags, have been fitted out in the ports of Liverpool and London, for the purpose of carrying slaves from the coast of Africa to the Spanish and Portuguese settlements in America; and several adventures of this description have actually been completed.

The persons, however, who are the most deeply engaged in this nefarious traffic, appear to be citizens of the United States of America. These shelter themselves from the penal consequences of their criminal conduct by means of a nominal sale both of ship and cargo at some Spanish or Swedish port, (the Havannah for example, or the island of St. Bartholomew) they are thus put in a capacity to use the flags of these states and so disguised, have carried on their slave trading speculations during the last year, to an enormous extent.

The different communications received by the directors from the coast of Africa concur in stating, that in the month of October last, the coast was crowded with vessels known to be American, trading for slaves under Spanish and Swedish flags. The slaves thus procured, it is understood, were afterwards to be carried for sale, either to South America or to the Spanish West Indies. Some cargoes (there is reason to believe) were landed at St. Bartholomew's, and smuggled thence into English islands. The extent to which this evil has unexpectedly and suddenly proceeded, and its obvious influence on all the plans for promoting

the civilization of Africa, have induced the directors, since the last general meeting to turn a large share of their attention to the best means of restraining or removing it. Besides making the necessary representations from time to time, to government, they have taken measures for communicating to the officers of the Navy, distinct information respecting the provisions of the legislature on this point, and the manner in which those provisions have been eluded, as well as to point out the pecuniary advantages which would accrue to them from a vigorous enforcement of the abolition laws. The inducement to vigilance on the part of the navy is considerable, the captors being entitled to the forfeiture of both ship and cargo. And although all slaves found on board are liberated, yet there is a bounty allowed by government to the captors amounting to forty pounds for each man, thirty pounds for each woman, and ten pounds for each child so liberated. Instances have already occurred in which this bounty has been claimed and received.

The directors state, that in prosecuting their inquiries into this case, they uniformly experience on the part of the British government a prompt attention to their representations, and a cordial disposition to aid their efforts in preventing the infraction of the laws for the abolition of the slave trade.

It is to be remembered, to the honour of the government of the United States of America, that it seized an early opportunity of effecting the abolition of this trade as far as legislative enactments could effect it. America, however, has few or no means of enforcing her own commercial edicts. In despite of those edicts, however, her ships are now the great carriers of slaves, without any other defence against the penalties to which as Americans they are liable, than is afforded by the flag, and simulated clearances of some foreign state.

The directors have also received a letter containing much important information respecting a district of the gold coast, from Mr. Meredith. He states that the beneficial effects which might be expected to follow the abolition of the slave trade by Great Britain

have been greatly impeded by the continuance of it, though on a reduced scale by other nations. Accusations, predatory wars, &c. are not so frequent as formerly; but kidnapping, he adds, is still practised. That the inhabitants are more industrious, and that they have more confidence in their personal safety, he thinks is clearly observable. In short, the effects which have flowed from even a partial abolition of the slave trade, seem to him to prove that a total abolition would be attended with many more beneficial consequences; for though the export of slaves from Africa be now comparatively trifling, yet it keeps alive on the coast many of the mal-practices which would otherwise cease. The total abolition, he observes, is therefore necessary.

The directors have continued to receive the most satisfactory proofs that Africans are as susceptible of intellectual and moral culture as the natives of any other quarter of the globe.

By a decision of the Commissioners of appeal in prize causes, noticed at page 156 of this magazine, it may be seen that the decision of Sir William Grant will have a strong tendency to discourage this iniquitous and clandestine traffic.

An ample account has thus been given of the present state of the slave trade, from a conviction that to the true friends of mankind, the subject is of the highest importance. To them it is of more interest than the contests of rival potentates, or the dashing against each other of the ambitious disturbers of mankind.

The present state of Ireland is not consoling. There is a jealousy, and a want of co-operation in the attainment of truly valuable ends. It is disgraceful to our national character to see the bickerings that have lately taken place among the Catholics. The different parties among them recriminate on each other in most scurrilous and opprobrious language. There is a total want of dignity in their bickerings. Let the contending parties among them at least use gentlemanlike language towards each other in their disputes, and not by their intemperance give a triumph to the enemies of

emancipation and equal rights, which will doubtless be eagerly embraced by them. Let people differ, and yet forbear to reproach those who hold different sentiments, with being actuated by the worst of motives. It is an excellent rule in disputes, and also best calculated to produce a right decision, to use soft words, but hard arguments.

Although the dissensions among the the Catholics cannot but be subjects of painful regret to their liberal minded fellow citizens, yet it must be acknowledged that the Catholics suffer in many ways, perhaps, more from indirect causes, than from a want of what is termed emancipation. The spirit of the Orange system tends to prevent in many places an impartial administration of the laws in their case, at least among the inferior officers of justice. In the dernier resort the judges on several occasions, have highly to their honour, discovered a disposition to keep the fountains of justice open, and rebuked glaring instances of partiality: but much mischief may be done in cases which do not come before a court of justice, and which the parties aggrieved, have not the means to bring forward. Magistrates may not always stand plumb, and the sway of an Orange engagement may draw from a perpendicular. Officers of still an inferior rank have much in their power, and more than in one case, which accidentally came to the writer's knowledge, have constables been unwilling to come forward in a prosecution against a brother Orangeman. This observation is made, not for the purpose of promoting feelings of irritation among parties, but to point out the evils of the Orange system, and its injurious tendency on a strict and impartial execution of the laws. It is a system highly injudicious and impolitic, and replete with the seeds of favouritism and injustice. It appears to be gradually wearing away in some places, and every friend to his country, and to justice must rejoice in its total abrogation.

Since the article in the last retrospect on the subject of Holland was written, the address of Louis Bonaparte on his secession from the throne, has appeared. He seems to be worthy of a better

cause; and virtuously discovers a disposition not to rule, when only the mere pageant of authority is left to him by his all grasping brother. The Hollanders are however, scarcely deserving of a better fate. Their habits had reduced them to a state fit to become slaves, and in such a debased situation, the choice of masters is not of great importance. But the peasants of Switzerland deserved better than to be subjugated under tyrannical sway. The aristocrats of Berne and of the other cantons excite little or no interest, but the *virtuous people* of Underwalden will long be remembered in the annals of Freedom. The spirited writer of a poem reviewed in another department of this Magazine, thus characterizes the poor Swiss and the unprincipled attack of France:

"Nor Virtue yet had fled her rock-built bower  
When Gaul's intruding Demon, drunk with power,  
Burst on that paradise: appalled he found  
A Spartan fortitude embattled round.  
Then spotless victims of a doom severe,  
They died upon their murdered country's bier,  
Died not in vain, to stamp on that proud name  
The weight of vengeance and the curse of shame.  
Plant thy bright eagles o'er each prostrate realm,  
Audacious France! and headlong, from his helm  
Each dozing steers-man dash, but hope not thou  
Amid the plundered baubles of thy brow,  
To twine a wreath from Freedom's sacred tree,  
It blooms with virtue, but it dies with thee."

The fate of Switzerland, as far as the people are concerned, makes a strong impression on the haters of despotism, and here the conduct of Bonaparte appears in all the fulness of turpitude. On the score of Switzerland, we will upbraid him even at the risque of appearing to join the mean herd, who abuse him, and yet praise the very same conduct in their patrons. But they who advocate abuses at home, have no right to blame despotism abroad; Bonaparte can only be consistently and successfully opposed by arrows drawn from the quiver of Free-

dom. Among the documents will be found an address to the Spanish people, previously to the assembling of the Cortes. It contains some just observations on the necessity of choosing suitable representatives, which might be read in these countries with advantage, but scarcely without exciting a blush at our own deficiencies. What a pity that more care had not been taken to rouse the energies of the Spanish nation to patriotism, and the love of liberty.

The business in Spain and Portugal, at least as far as British aid is concerned, is drawing fast to a termination. Ciudad Rodrigo taken, Almeida invested, the advanced guard under General Craufurd defeated, and Lord Wellington's army in full retreat, with the French force daily increasing, the catastrophe cannot be at a great distance. It remains only to hope after the great and fruitless waste of blood and treasure, already experienced in those injudicious expeditions, that the retreat may be less afflicting than the extreme sufferings experienced by the army under general Moore. The prudence and caution of that General, and the complication of distresses suffered by that army will decidedly stamp in the page of history the character of imbecility and want of foresight on the policy, by which this war has been conducted by the planners in the cabinet. Yet this succession of blunders is not to be attributed to a blind fatality which could not be surmounted, or to any other cause than the superiority of a strong energetic mind, discovered in the successive rulers of France, often indeed most mischievously and immorally directed, over the wavering and feeble councils of men, assuming, to be statesmen without possessing the essentially requisite abilities, or more fixed principles of justice. How changed is France! and how different are the talents of the *new men*, whom the impetus of the revolution has raised to the top of the wheel, from those of the *effete* and *feeble nobles* of the old regime. Britain has now adversaries of a different stamp, and to oppose them requires more vigour and prudence, than have yet been manifested by her statesmen. Well might Pitt on his

death-bed on a view of the effects of the pernicious system in which he had been the ostensible actor, and mistakingly identifying his own want of success with the supposed welfare of the state, exclaim, "Ah, my country!" and well might Charles James Fox close his career of unsuccessful opposition to such fatal measures, by saying, in contemplation of the difficulties into which his country had been brought, "My friends, I pity you."

May renovated order, and all restoring reform arise out of the present confusion. Whether we contemplate our internal state, or our external relations, the necessity of reform is by the experience of every successive day becoming more apparent to those who will open their eyes to see the dangers which await us! We are told of the dangers of reform, by men interested in the continuance of abuses, but the dangers of an obstinate retention of corruption, and a senseless pertinacity in error, are more to be dreaded, as pressing more fatally on us in the present crisis, as prognostics of the disease which afflicts us.

### DOCUMENTS.

#### PROCLAMATION OF THE SPANISH JUNTA.

*Cadiz, July 12.*

"CITIZENS OF CADIZ—Your wishes are now to be accomplished with those of all Spain. Your sacred rights, forgotten and nearly lost, will be restored by the Cortes to be convened in the following month. You are about to exercise the solemn functions of legislators, of which you have been deprived by tyranny, falsely called legitimate and sovereign authority. With difficulty we have arrested the sword of power, which has caused the evils that we deplore, to return to you your just claim to have independent representatives who shall watch over your happiness. The oppressor of human nature would not have advanced so far in his attempts at universal despotism, if the nations under his iron sway had known how to maintain the dignity of men and citizens, which knowledge constitutes the vigour and strength of Empires. History, citizens, has taught us by more than one example how much Spain has been indebted to that heroic fortitude, which, in our Cortes, has made Kings themselves amenable for the abuse of their power

Remember that Princes have sometimes treated you as if they had no duties, and you no rights, and as if the uttering of your complaints were a crime against the State.

"Commence then your duties in Spain, which is as free to you as it was to your ancestors. For this purpose employ the right of suffrage, which you enjoy by nature and by the constitution of your country; and let not intrigue and seduction surprise you in the very asylum of your liberty, dictating to you the selection which ought to be the unbiassed exercise of your will and pleasure. Favour, friendship, rank and property give no title, and it is not by men possessing these that the country is to be saved. Patriotism, talent, merit proved by experience—these it is, that should claim your attention. He who solicits your vote, and employs artifices to attract public approbation, estimates at a low rate the independence of a generous people, and ought to be marked by you as a suspicious character. True patriotism possesses too much genuine modesty to be the hero of its own story; and would rather convince you by deeds than words that it deserves your confidence.

"Neither ought you to forget that you are responsible to your children and posterity, for the faithful discharge of your duty on this occasion. Since the establishment of the Monarchy, you are perhaps the only Spaniards who have enjoyed so fair an opportunity to give permanence and solidity to civil institution. It, after two years of uncertainty and vacillation, when you have been so often brought to the edge of the precipice, you do not yet discover the origin of your calamities to consist in the imperfect representation of the national will, what will be the consequence? The government and all good citizens will lament your culpable blindness, and they will have at least the negative consolation of knowing that history will point you out as the destroyers of your family, and the assassins of your country.

"You cannot now justify yourselves, as at the commencement of the revolution, by the consternation into which the enemy threw the country, so that having no means of chusing and examining, you were given up to clamorous pretenders who availed themselves of the confusion, to domineer over you; nor can you vindicate yourselves by professing that you are the dupes of intrigue, as the painful experience of two years has taught you how to detect and despise it. You are now enabled to exercise calm reflection, and to overcome those influences which